

Liming Can Be A Cheap Way To “Fertilize” This Fall

SPRINGFIELD, MO.

As fertilizer prices continue to increase, good soil management becomes even more important according to Brie Menjoulet, agronomy specialist with University of Missouri Extension.

“In fact, the pH of soil has a considerable affect on the availability of many plant nutrients,” said Menjoulet.

A pH of 6.2 to 6.5 is the optimum range to maximize nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sulfur, boron, and molybdenum availability in the soil even though some plants prefer soils that are more acid or alkaline.

“Adding lime to acid soils not only increases nutrient availability, but can also improve soil structure and tilth, better emergence of small-seeded crops, and increase legume stand persistence,” said Menjoulet.

The pH of a soil is affected by several variables and can be somewhat resistant to change. The effects of liming are not instantaneous and time

is needed for lime to work. The amount of time needed depends on the purity and fineness of the lime applied.

“Most limes will begin adjusting soil pH within three to six months, which makes fall a great time to apply lime,” said Menjoulet.

The amount of lime needed should be determined from a soil test.

Once the results of a soil test are received, the lime recommendations will be expressed as “effective neutralizing material,” ENM, and are based on soil pH and the crop that will be grown on the land.

All liming materials should have an ENM. To figure the lime required in tons per acre, divide the ENM recommendation on the soil test results by the ENM of the lime.

“Applying lime will not fix all nutrient problems in the soil. But, liming an acid soil can be a more budget-friendly method to increase the amount of available nutrients in the soil and increase forage production compared to adding fertilizer alone,” said Menjoulet. △